

## *THE HEALING PROCESS*

1. Healing begins with TELLING SOMEONE ABOUT THE ABUSE.
2. For many survivors of sexual abuse, the secret is kept for many years – sometimes well into adulthood.
3. Keeping the secret of sexual abuse hurts the survivor emotionally, physically, and spiritually.
4. It is NEVER too late to tell someone – even if the abuse happened years ago. However, it is important to tell the right person – someone who cares about the survivor and will be supportive. It is critical to the survivor’s healing to get the right kind of help. Unfortunately, there are still a lot of people (including counselors and ministers) who do not know how to help a sexual abuse survivor.
5. The most important part of healing is to realize that the abuse was NEVER the fault of the survivor.
6. Almost all survivors blame themselves, thinking that they “let” the abuse happen because they didn’t fight or say “no.”
7. Even if a survivor was a teenager when the abuse took place, it was still not his or her fault.
8. Another important part of healing is for the survivor to STOP BEING ASHAMED that he or she was abused.
9. The shame should be on the abuser – NOT ON THE SURVIVOR!
10. The survivor can experience healing even if the abuser is never punished. Unfortunately most sexual abusers are never prosecuted. Even when abusers are prosecuted, they receive short jail terms or none at all.
11. The survivor can experience healing even if the abuser is never confronted. Most abusers will never admit what they did and confronting them is often very painful for the survivor. It can be very helpful for the survivor to go through the exercise of writing confrontational letters to the abuser without every sending them.
12. Healing from the sexual abuse will not take the memory of what happened away, but it will empower the survivor to reclaim his or her right to live without fear, self-blame, shame, depression, and guilt. Eventually, the memory of the abuse loses its power over the survivor.
13. No one can predict how long the healing process will take. Often it depends on how severe the abuse was, how long it took place, how much support the survivor is receiving.
14. The important thing is that HEALING FROM SEXUAL ABUSE IS POSSIBLE FOR EVERY SURVIVOR.